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AN ARTIST'S POINTS ON A GOOD PICTURE

The man or woman who can appreciate good color and harmony of color has gone a long way toward knowing how to appreciate a good picture. I think as a rule you will find that fewer people know good color and fine harmony than can recognize a good composition. A man who has never studied art and who has never heard of "perspective" may be able to tell if the drawing of a building is not right or even if a picture is not well balanced.

Good composition is just that—a balance of the different parts of the picture. Take a marine, for instance. The rocks with their seaweed in the foreground are balanced by the sails off at sea. Again, take a typical New England pasture which is not yet finished. Now, look at it and see if it doesn't impress you that something is lacking. The woods are massed in the background, but there is nothing there, as yet, to give balance to the composition. It needs, perhaps, some cattle or sheep in the lane in the foreground and middle distance.

Then again, in a poor composition, there may be a conflicting of lines and no point of interest. A good picture has a point of interest where the eye centers. Other details are in a way subsidiary. The artist might take almost any landscape view and paint it without regard to composition. There would be no center of interest, only a huddled mass of trees and rocks. With an eye to composition, he selects and arranges for a pleasing effect, and that pleasing effect is produced by a balance of parts.

In a good picture you will seldom find the eye resting upon the features at the extreme edge, nor again precisely in the center. The interesting part, toward which everything else in the picture leads the eye, is almost always a trifle outside of the center. This makes the whole more harmonious.

As to finding the material or subject for a good composition, it is rather interesting to note the difference in the way an amateur works from a professional. The former, out for a landscape, will travel half a day in search of an attractive scene. He travels miles to find a little. On the other hand, the professional will go over the same ground and find many subjects suggestive of good pictures. He sees a picture at every hand, because he has learned how to select and group effectively.

Then there is the matter of good technique. It is something by which an artist's work is individualized to a great extent. Technique refers to the way a man paints, his manner of handling his materials. This may be peculiar to a man and yet be pleasing. As far as the artist himself is concerned, if he has worked long enough to be a

master of his materials, he never gives a thought as to how he is handling his brush or paint. His whole mind is on the matter of good composition, harmony of color, and the effort to get the "feeling of the subject."

This brings us to another important characteristic of a good picture. It must be painted with feeling. It must tell a story and be able to impress this story upon the beholder. A picture may be good in composition, fine in coloring, and even represent a good subject, and yet be lacking in feeling. The fact that two men never paint the same scene alike is due to the differing sentiment with which they view it. Some paint in a dramatic way, and their pictures are full of this feeling. Some always "feel" the warm colors in a scene and others the colder ones. There is a landscape with Hardwick's name upon it. Hardwick is an artist who had some of his landscapes in the Boston Art Club exhibit this season. You can tell by looking at the picture that the "feeling" of the oil is cold. It lacks any warm tones. It is good, but another artist could not paint in that "feeling" at all. He would see warm colors and so have to paint them that way.

Just here I want to say a word for original work. There is a great deal of imitation and copying done nowadays, but it amounts to little. The way to teach art is to let the person's individuality express itself. The value of a painting is largely in its expression of an individuality. It is as foolish for a person to copy others' pictures as for a man to copy another's handwriting. "Be yourself and see for yourself and express yourself" is a good motto, if you are studying art.

It is all a great study, and more than one realizes at first. But it is well worth while to study it enough to appreciate good art, even if you never become an artist yourself. The schools are doing a good work, and fewer homes are filled up with tawdry stuff and senseless bric-à-brac in every nook and corner. Yet there is still a wide difference between the appearance of homes of culture and of those of the masses.

The more people are educated the less they look for gaudiness. Just now the tendency in the matter of picture-framing is to have quiet colors that in effect slip back into the wall and leave the eye to dwell upon the painting. That is what is of interest. The frame should harmonize with, but be simple and not more attractive than, the picture it incloses. A great many times a good picture is spoiled by poor framing.

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